

The Civil War**Lesson 2**

The Birth of the Republican Party

Key Terms and People

Franklin Pierce 14th president

nativism Favoring native-born people over immigrants

Know-Nothing Party Political party formed to stop the influence of immigrants

Free-Soil Party Political party formed to oppose extending slavery in the territories

Republican Party Political party formed to oppose extending slavery in the territories

Horace Greeley Newspaper editor who strongly supported the newly formed Republican Party

John C. Frémont Republican candidate in the 1856 presidential election

James Buchanan 15th president

Before You Read

In the last lesson you read about the violence that erupted over the slavery issue. In this lesson you will learn why new political parties formed in the mid-1800s.

As You Read

Use a timeline and chart to take notes on the growth of the Republican Party in the 1850s.

NEW POLITICAL PARTIES EMERGE

How did the slavery issue affect the Whig Party?

The issue of slavery caused the nation's Whig Party to split. The party became divided into northern antislavery Whigs and southern proslavery Whigs. Because it was not unified, the Whig Party lost much of its political power. As a result, Democratic candidate **Franklin Pierce** won the presidential election in 1852.

The Whig Party soon split even further. Some Whig members joined the American Party. This party was concerned about the growing number of

immigrants in the United States. They believed in **nativism**, the favoring of native-born Americans over immigrants.

Nativists were primarily middle-class Protestants. They were dismayed by the growing immigrant population and wanted strict limits on the number allowed in the country. They also were bothered by the increasing number of Catholics. Anti-Catholic bias often resulted from a fear that Catholics would be influenced by the pope on issues involving the United States. Nativists felt that the Catholic immigrants who had flooded into the country during the 1830s and 1840s

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could form a conspiracy to overthrow democracy.

Nativists formed the **Know-Nothing Party**. The party did well in the elections of 1854, but soon split over the issue of slavery and disappeared.

1. What did the Know-Nothing Party favor?

**ANTISLAVERY PARTIES FORM;
THE 1856 ELECTION**

What antislavery parties formed in the 1800s?

Other new parties arose during the mid-1800s. The **Free-Soil Party** was against extending slavery in the western territories. In the presidential election of 1848, the party chose former Democrat Martin Van Buren as its candidate. The Free-Soil Party did not receive any electoral votes. However, it did get 10 percent of the popular vote.

Northern opposition to slavery in the territories was not necessarily based on positive feelings toward African Americans. Many northerners were Free-Soilers but not abolitionists. They supported racist laws prohibiting settlement by blacks in their communities and denying them the right to vote.

What Free-Soilers primarily objected to was slavery's competition with free white workers. The extension of slavery, they believed, directly threatened the free labor system.

The new **Republican Party** formed in 1854. This party was diverse because it

took in people of many viewpoints. People frustrated by the split in the Whig Party, such as newspaper editor **Horace Greeley**, supported the Republicans. Like the Free-Soil Party, the Republicans wanted to keep slavery out of the territories.

The Republican Party's main competition was the well-organized Know-Nothing Party. Both parties targeted the same groups of voters. By 1855 the Republicans had set up party organizations in about half the northern states. However, they lacked a national organization. What they needed was a national slavery issue. Then came several national incidents, including Bleeding Kansas. As a result, the Republican Party had issues with which to challenge the Democrats.

In 1856 the Republicans ran their first candidate for president, **John C. Frémont**. The Democrats nominated **James Buchanan** of Pennsylvania. He was a northerner but had a lot of friends who were southerners. He was the only true national candidate. He won the election, but only with 45 percent of the popular vote. The election showed that the Democrats could win the presidency with a national candidate who could compete in the North without alienating southerners. It also showed that the Know-Nothings were in decline and that the Republican Party was a political force in the North.

2. What view did the new Republican Party and Free-Soil Party share?

Lesson 2, *continued*

Complete the chart below by writing answers in the appropriate boxes.

1834	The Whig Party is formed and then splits over the slavery issue.		
1848	The Free-Soil Party is formed.	→	1. What did the Free-Soilers oppose? Why?
1854	The Know-Nothing Party, formed to promote nativism, is soon split over the slavery issue.	→	2. What did the Know-Nothings oppose? Why?
	The Republican Party is formed.	→	3. What made the Republican Party different from other parties?
1855	“Bleeding Kansas”		
1856	In the presidential election, Democrat James Buchanan defeats Republican John C. Frémont and the Know-Nothing candidate, Millard Fillmore.	→	4. What did the election indicate about the Democrats?
		→	5. What did the election indicate about the Republicans?